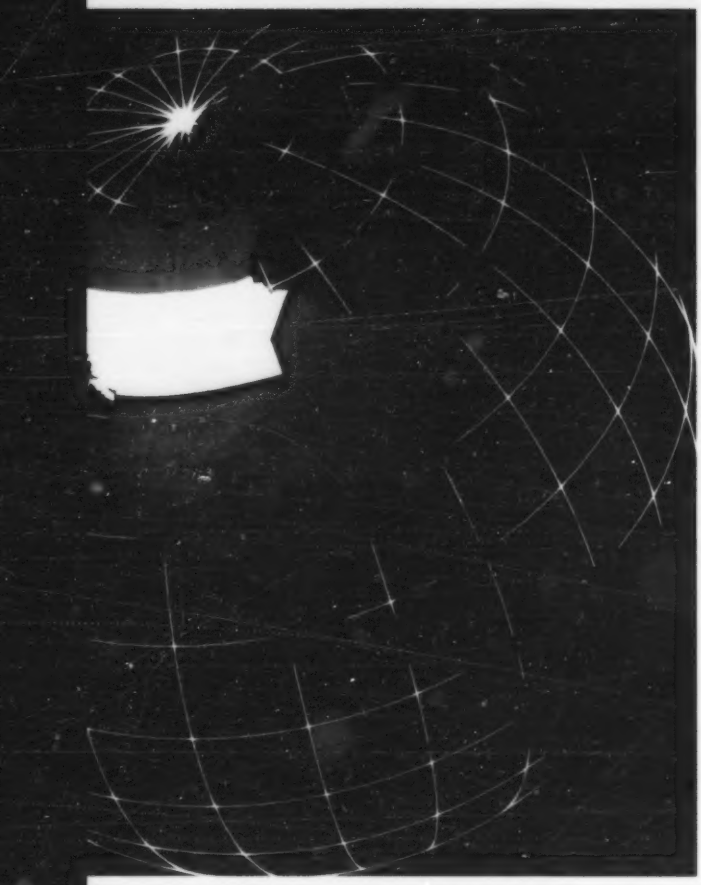

Looking West

A Survey of Western Canadians

Loleen Berdahl
Canada West Foundation Director of Research

June 2001

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The opinions expressed in this document are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Canada West Foundation's donors, subscribers, or Council.

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PREFACE

As part of the first year of its **Building the New West Project,** the Canada West Foundation commissioned the **Building the New West Survey** to explore the the attitudes, aspirations, and public policy preferences of western Canadians. Based on the input of 3,256 respondents, the survey results outlined in this report provide a context within which to place debate about the future of the region.

The Building the New West Project explores the strategic positioning of western Canada within the global economy, and draws on a number of research and public consultation initiatives. The first year of research includes both the Building the New West Survey and a landmark report on the West entitled **State of the West: Western Canadian Demographic and Economic Trends** (copies are available from the Canada West Foundation).

In addition to this research, the Canada West Foundation held public consultations in each of the four western provinces over the month of May 2001. All of these first year activities will lead to a **Blueprint for Western Canadian Prosperity,** to be released in fall 2001. This blueprint will identity the key issues that the West needs to address to ensure long-term prosperity, and answer many pressing questions about western Canada. Subsequent Building the New West Project research will explore the topic areas identified in the Blueprint.

INTRODUCTION

Western Canada - British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba – is Canada's second largest region and an important contributor to Canada's economy, society and culture. Like all Canadian provinces, western provinces are grappling with the need to manage the opportunities and challenges that accompany globalization while maintaining and promoting prosperity, high standards of living and quality of life. At the same time, there is continued concern about the representation of the West in federal institutions, and concern about feelings of western alienation. To decide the future strategic directions for the West, it is important that the views and opinions of western Canadians be fully considered. For this reason, Canada West conducted one of the largest public opinion surveys of western Canada ever, covering a wide range of public policy issues. The purpose of this study is to inform the public, business and community leaders, as well as elected officials and public servants at all three levels of government about the views and perspectives of western Canadians.

The survey finds that there are many points of similarity among the four western provinces. Be they in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Manitoba, respondents express feelings of alienation, are interested in Senate reform and electoral reform, believe that increased global trade has been beneficial to Canada, and feel that present immigration levels are about right. These points of similarity suggest that there is some consistency in political culture and thought within the West. However, there were some important differences, particularly relating to issues of mobility and provincial futures. These differences raise a number of public policy questions that governments and citizens alike must consider.

Looking West: A Survey of Western Canadians provides an overview of the survey results, noting key provincial, demographic and partisan variations. The report concludes by considering some of the key questions raised about western Canada, dispelling some common myths and recognizing important realities. It is hoped that the survey data will be useful to Canadians and their governments in ongoing discussions about the future of western Canada.

METHODOLOGY

The *Building the New West Survey* is based on a random sample telephone survey of western Canadians 18 years of age or older. The survey was administered to 3,256 respondents between January and March 2001 by Accord Research on behalf of the Canada West Foundation and the University of Calgary Research Unit for the Study of Civil Society (RUSCS). Funding support for the survey administration was provided by RUSCS through a Donner Canadian Foundation grant, and support for the survey analysis was provided in part by Alberta International and Intergovernmental Affairs.

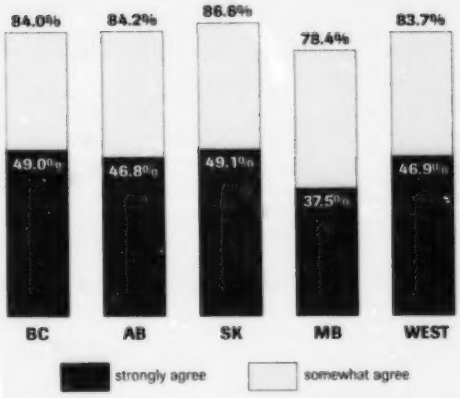
To allow for statistically significant analyses of each western province, as well as the West as a whole, a relatively large sample was used for each province. Overall, the sample includes 812 interviews from British Columbia, 814 from Alberta, 813 from Saskatchewan, and 817 from Manitoba. The total sample size is 3,256. There is 95% certainty that the survey results are within +/- 1.7% accuracy. For province-specific analysis, there is 95% certainty that the results are within +/- 3.4% accuracy. In the presentation of aggregate regional data, a weighting adjustment factor was applied to match each province's sample weight to its portion of the regional population 18 years of age and over.

THE WEST IN CANADA: IDENTITY AND ALIENATION

There is no denying that there are considerable variations among the four western provinces; this is seen in demographic and economic data (Roach and Berdahl, 2001), in provincial politics and even in climate and geography. Despite these variations, western Canadians see the West as a region. Indeed, most western Canadians agree with the statement, "The West is a distinct region, different in many ways from the rest of Canada" (Figure 1).

Federal party vote affects impressions of the West as a region, with agreement increasing as one moves from left to right on the traditional ideological spectrum. NDP voters are least supportive of this notion, with almost eight in ten NDP voters agreeing (79.1%). Canadian Alliance voters are highly supportive of the idea of the West as a distinct region, with over nine in ten (91.8%) agreeing.

Figure 1:
Is the West a Distinct Region?

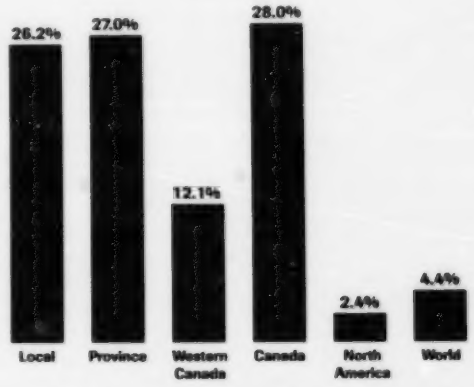


Survey Question: The West is a distinct region, different in many ways from the rest of Canada. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree). n=3,186

Identities

Seeing the West as a distinct region and identifying oneself as a western Canadian are two different things. Respondents were asked: "Which of the following would you *primarily* identify yourself with: your city, town or rural area; your province; western Canada; Canada; North America; or the world?"[1] Respondents were also asked: "And what would you next identify yourself with?" The responses indicate that western Canadian regional identities are not particularly strong. While over eight in ten see the West as a region, only one in four identifies as a western Canadian, and only 12% identify themselves *primarily* as a western Canadian (Figure 2). Saskatchewan respondents are the most likely to identify with western Canada, and Manitoba respondents are the least likely. Individuals most likely to identify with western Canada are older respondents, men, Canadian Alliance voters, and those with less than a grade twelve education. Those least likely to identify with western Canada are those under 24 years of age, students, Liberal voters, women, and the highly educated.

Figure 2:
Primary Identifications in the West



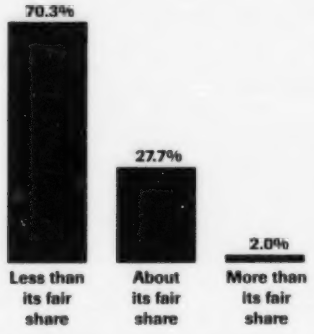
Survey Question: Which of the following would you *primarily* identify with? (one answer only) (your city, town or rural area; your province; western Canada; Canada; North America; the world) n=3,225

When both primary and secondary identifications are considered, the province emerges as the strongest geographic identification, with six in ten respondents (60.4%) stating that they identify themselves with

their province of residence. Individuals most likely to identify with their province are middle income earners, females, Canadian Alliance or Progressive Conservative voters, rural respondents, and respondents with lower education levels (as education increases, identification with the province decreases).

One interesting variation on the identity questions is seen in identification with Canada. In two of the four provinces – Alberta and Saskatchewan – less than half of the respondents select Canada as an identity. Indeed, in Saskatchewan the national and local identity levels are near equal. It is difficult to say what, if any, are the implications of this lack of national identification. It is the highly educated, high income earning respondents, as well as Liberal voters, who are the most likely to select a national identity; lower educated respondents, low income earning respondents, rural respondents, as well as Canadian Alliance voters, are the least likely.

Figure 3:
Provincial Influence on National Decisions



Survey Question: In your opinion, how much influence does your province have on important national decisions in Canada? n=3,111

Another notable finding is the relatively high level of identification with local areas. Past survey research has typically asked identity questions that exclude local identities; it is striking that when local identities are included, the number of respondents identifying primarily with their city, town or rural area is nearly equal to the numbers identifying primarily with their province or with Canada. This suggests that researchers should make greater efforts to include local questions in their research, as this is clearly a geographic sphere of considerable importance to western Canadians. Local identities are particularly strong among students, women, those with college or trade diplomas/certificates, those living in either rural or large urban areas, and young people: nearly one in two respondents (48.4%) under the age of 35 select a local identification.

Western Alienation

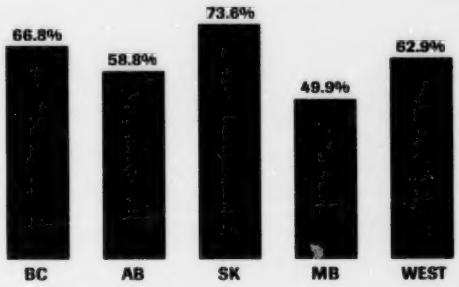
There has been considerable public discussion about the re-emergence of western alienation after the 2000 federal election. Media commentators have reported that westerners are dissatisfied with their role in the Canadian federation, and feel under-appreciated within Canada. The survey data certainly support these sentiments, with a majority of respondents expressing discontent on a number of alienation questions.[2]

The strongest discontent is seen with respect to provincial influence on national matters. When asked, "In your opinion, how much influence does your province have on important national decisions: more than its fair share, less than its fair share, or about its fair share?", seven in ten western Canadians stated that their province does not have its fair share of influence (Figure 3). Although a majority in each province believes their province has less than its fair share of influence, there are strong provincial differences on this question. Three in four respondents in BC (76.7%) and Saskatchewan (75.1%) stated that their province lacks influence, compared to approximately six in ten in Alberta (64.3%) and Manitoba (57.8%). It is noteworthy that four in ten Manitoba respondents (40.7%) feel their province has about its fair share, making Manitoba the least "alienated" province on this measure. Responses to this question also varied considerably with federal vote: over eight in ten Canadian Alliance voters (85.3%) report that their province lacks its share of influence on national decisions.

A related question asked survey respondents: "In your opinion, is your province treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not?" Almost two-thirds of western Canadians responded "no," with over one-third (37.1%) stating that their province does receive its appropriate level of respect (Figure 4). The respect question taps strongly into feelings of alienation, and the provincial differences are striking. Alberta, the province often referred to in alienation debates, falls well behind Saskatchewan and BC on this measure: in Saskatchewan, nearly three-quarters of the respondents report a lack of respect for Saskatchewan, while in BC over two-thirds hold the same opinion for their own province. Manitoba is also unique on this measure: half of Manitoba respondents (50.1%) feel that their province is treated with the appropriate respect. Although responses to this question varied with federal party vote, it is worth noting that even 51.7% of Liberal voters responded that their province does not receive its appropriate level of respect.

The last alienation question finds similar levels of discontent. Survey respondents were asked: "Thinking about all the money the federal government spends on different programs and on transfers to the provinces, do you think that your province receives more than its fair share, less than its fair share, or about its fair share?" Six in ten

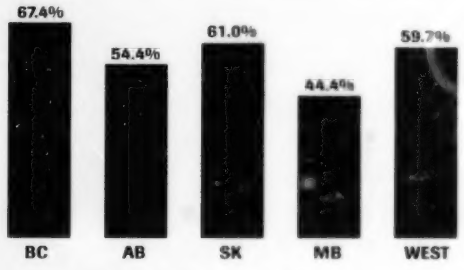
Figure 4:
My Province is NOT Treated With the Respect it Deserves



Survey Question: In your opinion, is your province treated with the respect it deserves in Canada or not? n=3,119

western Canadians stated that their province receives less than its fair share, while nearly four in of ten (38.6%) feel their province receives about its fair share (Figure 5). Less than 2% feel that their province receives more than its fair share. Yet again, BC and Saskatchewan stand out as being the most alienated on this measure, with Manitoba the least alienated. Indeed, less than a majority of Manitoba respondents feel that their province is not receiving its fair share. Not surprisingly, Canadian Alliance voters again stand apart, with seven in ten (72.6%) stating that their provincial share is unfair.

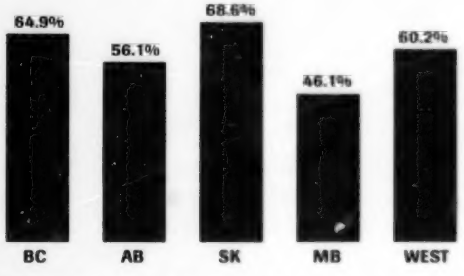
Figure 5:
My Province Receives LESS Than its Fair Share of Federal Transfers



Survey Question: Thinking of all the money the federal government spends on different programs and on transfers to the provinces, do you think your province receives more than its fair share; less than its fair share, about its fair share? n=2,871

To provide a more comprehensive understanding of western alienation, the three alienation questions – provincial respect, provincial influence, provincial share of federal transfers – were combined into an index.[3] The index indicates that feelings of alienation are high in western Canada: 60.2% of western Canadians score high on the index (Figure 6), with 34.6% scoring moderate alienation. Only 5.2% are found to have low alienation scores. The differences between the provinces are also striking. Saskatchewan respondents are the most alienated, with over two-thirds scoring "high." British Columbia respondents also score quite high on the alienation index. Relative to the alienation scores in Saskatchewan and BC, Alberta alienation seems moderate, with 56.1% of respondents scoring high on the alienation index. Manitoba is the least alienated western province; unlike the other three, it does not have a majority of respondents rating as highly alienated.

Figure 6:
Alienation Index – "High" Scores



The index is additive with no weighting applied to the questions. The index has three categories: low (low alienation scores on most questions answered), moderate (moderate alienation scores or a mix of high and low alienation scores on questions answered), and high (high alienation scores on most questions answered). Cronbach's alpha = .7037; n=3,236

Who are the alienated western Canadians? High alienation is more often seen among Canadian Alliance voters, respondents with post-secondary education below a university degree (college or trade diploma/certificate or incomplete university), older respondents and retired respondents. High alienation is seen less often among Liberal voters and non-voters, highly educated respondents (both bachelor and graduate/professional degrees), young people, students and unemployed respondents, and low income respondents. There is a near-linear relationship between age and alienation: as age increases, alienation increases. However, it should be noted that high alienation is seen among a majority of all age categories except 18-24 year olds.

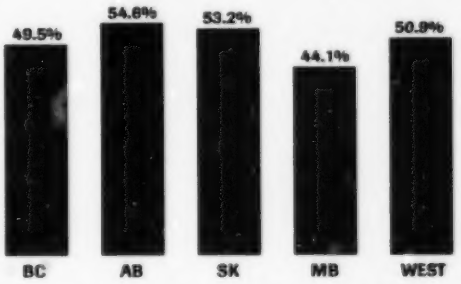
Government Powers

In addition to feeling alienated from the federal government, the majority of western Canadians feel the federal government has too much power. Respondents were asked: "In your opinion, does the federal government have too much power, do the provincial governments have too much power, or is the balance between them about right?" A small majority stated that the federal government has too much power (Figure 7), while four in ten (41.8%) stated that the balance is about right. Less than one in ten (7.3%) stated that the provincial governments have too much power. The sentiment that the federal government has too much power is strongest in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and weakest in Manitoba. Compared to the other western provinces, Manitoba respondents are the most satisfied with the current balance of powers; one in two (49.7%) stated that the current arrangement is about right.

Not surprisingly, opinions about the balance of powers vary with levels of alienation. Six in ten "highly alienated" respondents (63.1%) feel that the federal government has too much power, compared to only one-quarter of "non-alienated" respondents (26.0%). Other important variations are seen with federal party vote and age: seven in ten Canadian Alliance voters (70.6%) feel that the federal government has too much power, compared to only one-third of Liberal voters (33.5%); and as age increases, respondents are more likely to say that the federal government has too much power.

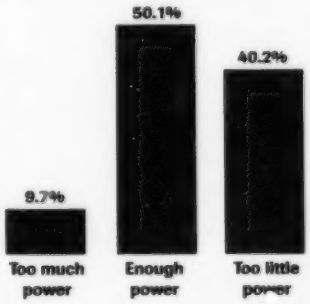
The survey also explored attitudes about municipal powers. Respondents were asked: "Thinking about all the things that the municipal government in your city, town or rural district is responsible for, do you think that this government has enough power to carry out its responsibilities, does it have too much power, or does it have too little power?" A small majority stated their municipal government has enough power, while four in ten stated it has too little power (Figure 8). One in ten stated that the municipal government has too much power. Differences between the provinces are not significant. Again, federal vote and age influence responses. Almost two-thirds of voters for non-mainstream parties (63.3%) feel that municipalities have too little power. Young people are also more likely than older people to say the municipalities have too little power. Respondents living in rural areas are more likely than those living in small or large urban areas to state that municipalities have too little power.

Figure 7:
The Federal Government Has Too Much Power



Survey Question: In your opinion, does the federal government have too much power, do the provincial governments have too much power, or is the balance between them about right? n=2,920

Figure 8:
Power of Municipal Government



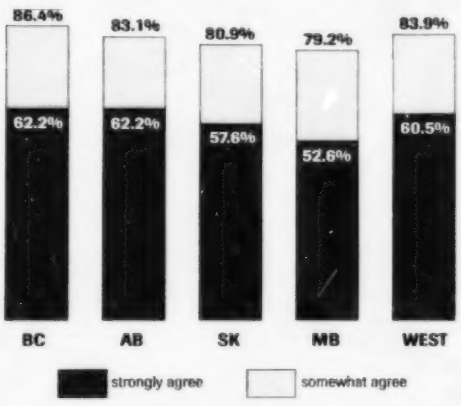
Survey Question: Thinking of the things that the municipal (local) government in your city, town or rural district is responsible for, do you think that this government has enough power to carry out its responsibilities, does it have too much power, or does it have too little power? n=3,024

Institutional Reform

Over the past three decades, the West has been the source of considerable pressure to reform Canada's national political system and its institutions. This institutional reform pressure is seen most strongly in efforts at Senate reform (see Vander Ploeg and McCormick, 2000), but also includes calls for electoral reform and the use of populist devices such as referendums and recall.

The survey measures public support for three types of institutional reform: Senate reform, citizen-initiated binding referendums, and electoral reform. It is striking that a majority of respondents in all four western provinces supported these reforms, again reinforcing that western Canadians are dissatisfied with the current political system.

Figure 9:
The Senate Should be Equal and Elected



Survey Question: Canada should replace the existing Senate with an elected Senate with equal representation from each province. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) n=3,036

The strongest responses are seen on the Senate reform issue. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: "Canada should replace the existing Senate with an elected Senate with equal representation from each province." Eight in ten western Canadians agree with this statement (Figure 9). Agreement does not vary dramatically among the provinces; while agreement is slightly lower in Manitoba, it should be stressed that a large majority of Manitoba respondents agree with Senate reform. Thus, this is a variation in degree only. Simply put, the vast majority of western Canadians favour an equal, elected Senate.

It is interesting to note the federal vote variations. As one might expect, agreement with Senate reform decreases as one moves from right to left along the ideological spectrum, but even among Liberal and NDP voters, support levels are high. Three-quarters of NDP voters (74.4%) and eight in ten Liberal voters (83.2%) agree with Senate reform. For Progressive Conservative voters, the number agreeing jumps to 88.4%. The support among Canadian Alliance voters is particularly high: 94.0% agree that the Senate should be reformed. The point to stress is that while there are variations according to federal vote, the majority of all federal voters support Senate reform. The support cannot be discounted as simply a partisan issue.

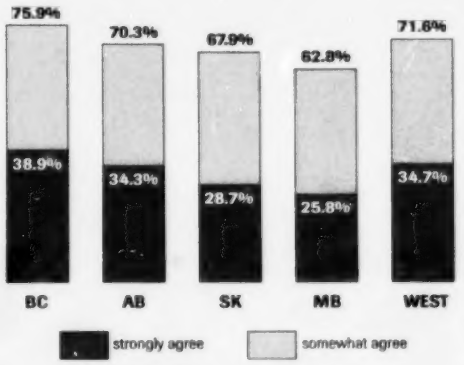
There is also majority support for electoral reform, although this support is not as strong. Respondents were asked to rate their

agreement with the statement: "Canada should replace the present electoral system with an electoral system based on proportional representation – that is, a system that distributes seats to each party according to its share of the popular vote." Seven in ten western Canadians agree with this, but the level of agreement declines as one moves from west to east, ranging from a high of three-quarters of BC respondents to a low of less than two-thirds of Manitoba respondents agreeing with proportional representation (Figure 10).

There are again differences along federal voting lines. Canadian Alliance voters are the strongest supporters of proportional representation, with over eight in ten agreeing. Liberal and NDP voters are the least supportive, with six in ten agreeing.

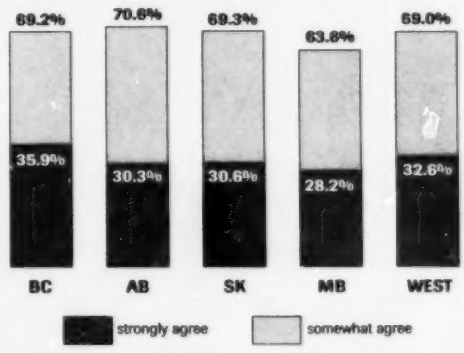
Similar levels of support are seen for the idea of binding referendums. Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: "Canadian citizens should be able to initiate binding referendums on issues of their choice." Seven in ten western Canadians agree with this option (Figure 11). Manitoba stands apart from the other western provinces on this issue, with just over six in ten respondents agreeing. Federal party vote is again an important point of difference; Alliance voters are the most supportive of citizen-initiated binding referendums (75.0% agree), and Liberal voters are the least supportive (59.9% agree).

Figure 10:
Replace Electoral System With Proportional Representation



Survey Question: Canada should replace the present electoral system with an electoral system based on proportional representation – that is, a system that distributes seats to each party according to its share of the popular vote. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) n=2,918

Figure 11:
There Should be Citizen-Initiated Binding Referendums



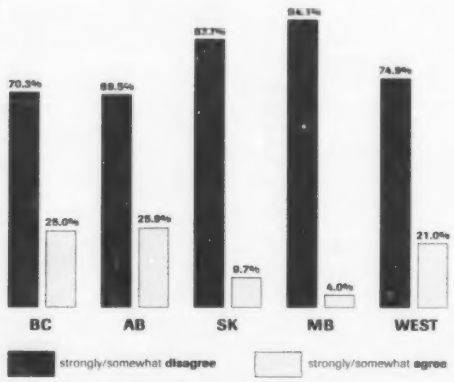
Survey Question: Canadian citizens should be able to initiate binding referendums on issues of their choice. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) n=3,061

Western Separatism

Concerns about western alienation inevitably lead to concerns about western separatism. Indeed, following the 2000 federal election there was some grassroots separatist activity in Alberta and Saskatchewan. But to what extent are western Canadians truly thinking about separatist options? To test this, the survey asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with the statement: "My province would be better off economically if it separated from Canada." It must be stressed that this is not a hard-line separatism question; by looking at economic implications alone, it fails to tap social and emotional ties to Canada. However, the economic separatism question does give an understanding of respondents' beliefs about the economic implications of belonging to Canada.

By and large, western Canadians do not feel separation would economically benefit their provinces. While levels of disagreement

Figure 12:
My Province Would be Better Off Economically if it Separated



Survey Question: My province would be better off economically if it separated from Canada. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) n=3,169

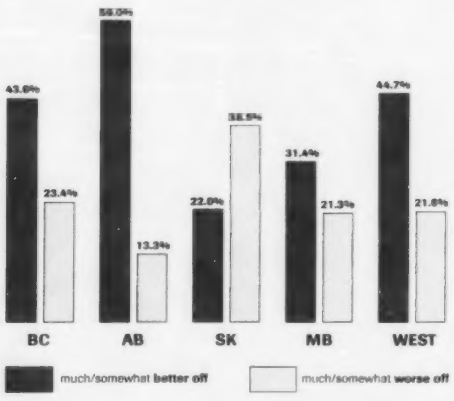
vary, in all four provinces a strong majority disagrees with the idea that their province would be better off economically if it were to separate from Canada (Figure 12). Two in ten agree that their province would be better off economically if it were to separate. On this question, the differences between the provinces are strong. Manitoba and Saskatchewan respondents have the highest levels of disagreement, with approximately nine in ten disagreeing. In Alberta and British Columbia, seven in ten disagree, but a full quarter of respondents agree that their province would be better off economically if it separated.

The strongest indicator of agreement with the economic separatism question is federal vote. Agreement declines as one moves from right to left on the ideological spectrum. Almost four in ten Canadian Alliance voters (38.5%) agree with the statement; by contrast, only 4.9% of NDP voters agree. Agreement also varies with level of alienation; three in ten "highly alienated" respondents (29.7%) agree that their province would benefit economically from separation.

Provincial Futures: Expectations and Relative Optimism

To what extent do western Canadians feel optimistic about the future of their provinces? When asked, "Five years from now, do you expect that your province will be much better off than now, somewhat better off than now, somewhat worse off than now, much worse off than now, or about the same as now?", respondents express modest optimism. In total, over four in ten expect their province to be better off, while two in ten expect their province to be worse off (Figure 13). The remaining one-third predict that their province will be about the same as now.

Figure 13:
Expectations for Provincial Future

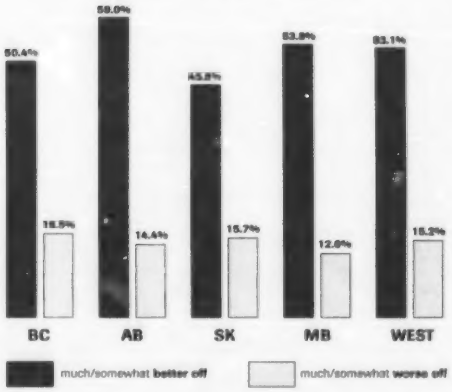


Survey Question: Five years from now, do you expect that your province will be: much better off than now; somewhat better off than now; somewhat worse off than now; much worse off than now; about the same as now? n=3,098

The differences between the provinces are striking. Perhaps not surprisingly, given the recent economic fortunes of Alberta, Albertans are the most optimistic, with six in ten expecting a better economic future. At the other extreme, Saskatchewan respondents are the most pessimistic: only two in ten expect a better provincial future, with four in ten predicting the province will be worse off in five years. Manitoba is the most "neutral" province on this measure, with nearly one in two (47.3%) expecting the provincial future to be about the same as it is now.

Western Canadians are slightly more optimistic about their own futures than that of their province. When asked, "Five years from now, do you expect that you will personally be much better off than now, somewhat better off than now, somewhat worse off than now, much worse off than now, or about the same as now?", respondents generally expressed optimism. A small majority expects to be personally better off, while only 15.2% think that they will be worse off (Figure 14). Again, important variations exist among the provinces, with Alberta respondents being the most optimistic, and Saskatchewan respondents being the least optimistic. These provincial gaps are not nearly as large as those seen in the provincial futures question.

Figure 14:
Expectations for Personal Future



Survey Question: Five years from now, do you expect that you will personally be: much better off than now; somewhat better off than now; somewhat worse off than now; much worse off than now; about the same as now? n=3,216

WESTERN COMMUNITIES: POPULATION & DEMOGRAPHY

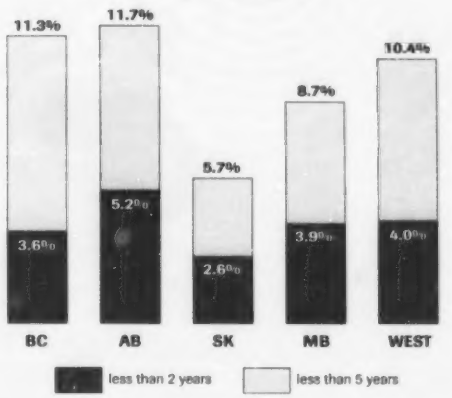
There are reasons for provinces to be concerned about population and demographic issues. A large population, particularly a young and educated population, means that a province has the labour pool necessary to meet the demands of the changing global economy. The size and nature of a province's population relates to its tax base, dependency ratios, and to policy, program, and infrastructure needs. In addition, as provinces grow and shrink in relative size, their weight in both the region and in Canada are affected.

Recent Mobility in the Provinces

Eight in ten western Canadians have lived in their province for over ten years, with seven in ten living in their province for over twenty years or their entire life. Thus, while Canadians are highly mobile, the vast majority of the population has a long history of provincial residency. This is particularly true for Saskatchewan and Manitoba respondents: nine in ten have resided in their province for over ten years.

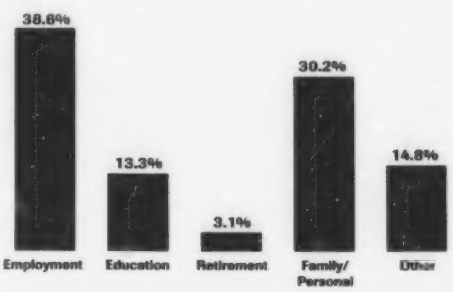
The data on very recent residents – those who have resided in their province for five years or less – speak to the very different population dynamics of each western province. In both Alberta and British Columbia, over one in ten residents has lived in the province for five years or less (Figure 15). For BC, most of those new residents arrived

Figure 15:
Provincial Residency of Five Years or Less



Survey Question: How long have you lived in your province? n=3,150

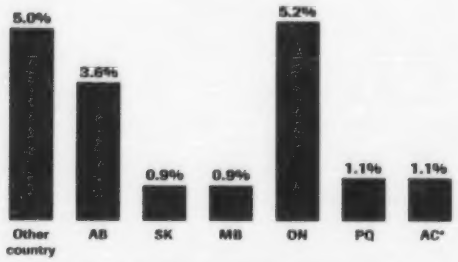
Figure 16:
Motivation for Move to Current Province



Survey Question: What brought you to your current province? (asked only of those who have lived in their current province for 10 years or less) n=534

Figure 17:
Residency in British Columbia

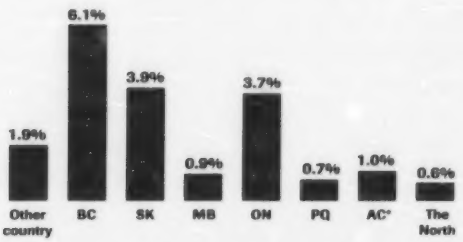
In BC over 10 years - 82.4%
Moved to province in last 10 years from:



*AC=Atlantic Canada. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Survey Question: Where did you reside prior to moving to your current province?
n=812

Figure 18:
Residency in Alberta

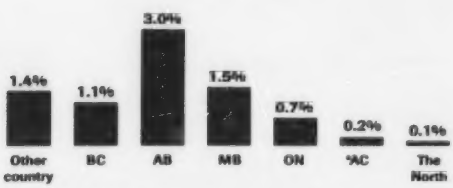
In AB over 10 years - 81.0%
Moved to province in last 10 years from:



*AC=Atlantic Canada. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Survey Question: Where did you reside prior to moving to your current province?
n=814

Figure 19:
Residency in Saskatchewan

In SK over 10 years - 92.0%
Moved to province in last 10 years from:



*AC=Atlantic Canada. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Survey Question: Where did you reside prior to moving to your current province?
n=813

over two years ago. For Alberta, many of those new residents arrived in the last two years – indeed, one in twenty Alberta residents has lived in the province for less than two years. The Manitoba and Saskatchewan figures are significantly lower.

Who are among the "recently mobile?" Those who are most likely to have lived in their current province for five years or less are the highly educated, students, and those under age 35. In other words, the individuals for whom cities, provinces and countries compete – young, skilled labour – are the most mobile. The reasons provided for moving to one's current province are varied; among those who have lived in their province for ten years or less, four in ten report moving for employment opportunities, and three in ten cite personal or family motivations (including moving with one's family) (Figure 16). One provincial variation of note is the fact that over one in two Albertans (53.5%) who moved to the province within the last ten years moved to the province for employment reasons, compared to only one in four (26.6%) BC respondents. For Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the figures are 40.9% and 40.6% respectively.

The survey asked all respondents who had lived in their province for ten years or less to identify where they lived prior to moving to their current province. This question provides some idea of the "source" of new provincial residents over the last ten years. Some interesting provincial variations are seen. For British Columbia, the "sources" for new residents are divided almost equally between Ontario, the other three western provinces, and other countries, with approximately 5% of BC respondents having moved to BC from each of these locations in the last ten years (Figure 17). For Alberta, the lion's share of new residents moved to Alberta from another western province; over one in ten Alberta respondents moved from another western province within the last ten years (Figure 18). The proportion of Alberta residents who moved to the province from Saskatchewan is striking, given the relatively small size of the Saskatchewan population. Indeed, the number who moved to Alberta from Saskatchewan equals the number who moved from Ontario, a province with ten times the population base.

The results indicate that relatively few people have moved to Saskatchewan and Manitoba in the last ten years. For both

Saskatchewan and Manitoba, the other western provinces are the main source of incoming residents (Figures 19 and 20).

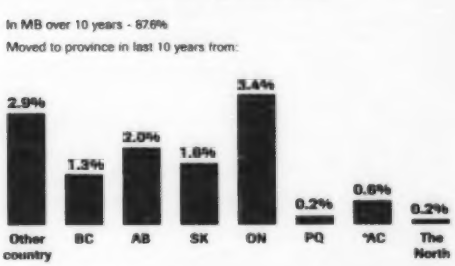
Future Mobility

Western Canadians are anticipating similar mobility rates in the next five years, but the differences among the provinces – particularly for younger respondents – are striking. When asked, "When you think of your life five years from now, how likely is it that you will still be living in your province?", nine in ten respondents (90.3%) indicate it is likely that they will remain in their province of residence, with one in ten indicating that it is unlikely that they will still live in their province (Figure 21). Alberta respondents are the least likely to anticipate moving out of province, and Saskatchewan respondents are the most likely.

The data for the 18-24 year olds present a more dramatic picture. For the West as a whole, two in ten 18-24 year olds anticipate moving out of province within five years (Figure 22). Two provinces – Alberta and Saskatchewan – vary considerably from this western Canadian average. Alberta 18-24 year olds are much less likely to anticipate moving within five years, while Saskatchewan 18-24 year olds are much more likely to anticipate an out of province move. In total, four in ten Saskatchewan 18-24 year olds feel it is unlikely that they will remain in the province in five years. It should also be noted that students – regardless of age – are also most likely to anticipate moving out of province; Saskatchewan students anticipate moving at much higher rates than students from the other three western provinces, while Alberta students anticipate moving at much lower rates. Together, these expectations present very different futures for the western Canadian provinces, given that provinces will need to attract and retain young and educated people in the years ahead in order to remain competitive.

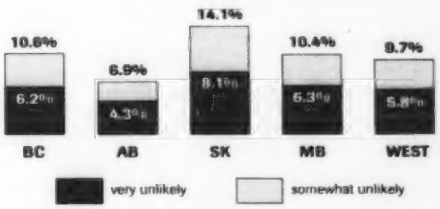
While most western Canadians are not anticipating moving, many would be willing to move out of province or even out of country for a better job. Respondents were asked: "If you were offered a better job than the one you have now, but in another Canadian province, would you be very willing, somewhat willing, not very willing, or not at all willing to consider moving to take the job?" The same question was asked about the United States. Overall, almost six in ten western

Figure 20:
Residency in Manitoba



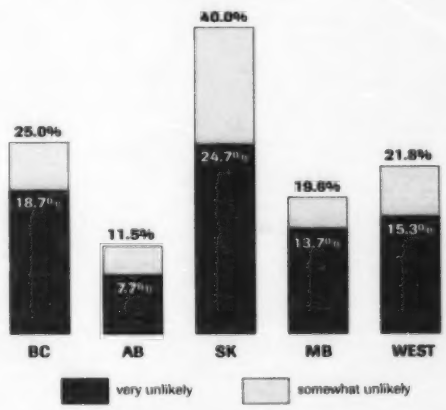
*AC=Atlantic Canada. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.
Survey Question: Where did you reside prior to moving to your current province?
n=617

Figure 21:
Unlikely to Live in Current Province in Five Years



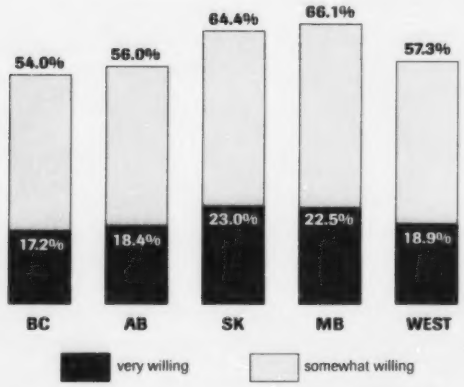
Survey Question: When you think of your life five years from now, how likely is it that you will still be living in your current province? (very likely; somewhat likely; somewhat unlikely; very unlikely) n=3,227

Figure 22:
Unlikely to Live in Current Province in Five Years
18-24 Year Olds



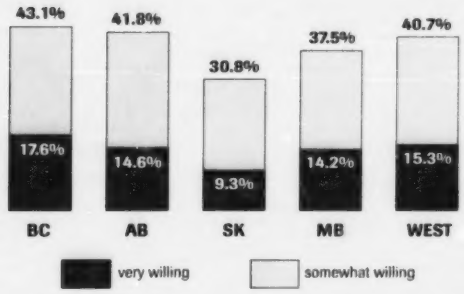
Survey Question: When you think of your life five years from now, how likely is it that you will still be living in your current province? (very likely; somewhat likely; somewhat unlikely; very unlikely) n=331

Figure 23:
Willing to Move to Another Province for a Better Job



Survey Question: If you were offered a better job than the one you have now, but in another Canadian province, would you be very willing, somewhat willing, not very willing, or not at all willing to consider moving to take the job? n=2,580

Figure 24:
Willing to Move to the US for a Better Job



Survey Question: If you were offered a better job than the one you have now, but in the United States, would you be very willing, somewhat willing, not very willing, or not at all willing to consider moving to take the job? n=2,665

Canadians would be willing to move to another Canadian province for a better job (Figure 23). When the better job is located in the United States, the number willing to move drops to four in ten (Figure 24). Saskatchewan and Manitoba respondents are the most willing to move to another Canadian province, but their interest in moving to the United States is considerably lower. Although Alberta and BC respondents are more willing to move within Canada than to the US, the gap is not nearly as large.

Who is most willing to move to another Canadian province? Young people (18-24) top the list, with nearly eight in ten (78.6%) willing to move within Canada for a better job. As age increases, willingness to move decreases. Highly educated respondents are also more willing to move within Canada for job opportunities: 61.9% of respondents with bachelor degrees and 49.7% of respondents with a graduate/ professional degrees are willing to move. There are important provincial variations, with Saskatchewan's highly educated the most willing to move, and BC's highly educated the least willing. A full 80% of Saskatchewan's respondents with graduate/professional degrees expressed a willingness to move to another Canadian province for better employment, again suggesting potential labour challenges for Saskatchewan. This is reinforced by the fact that over nine in ten Saskatchewan students (91.5%) would be willing to move for better employment.

Given the relatively high levels of willingness to move to another Canadian province for employment, it is striking that western Canadians are not nearly as willing to move to the United States for similar reasons. Indeed, over four in ten (42.6%) western Canadians are "not at all willing" to move to the US for better employment, with another 16.7% "not very willing." Saskatchewan respondents are particularly opposed to the idea. Again, willingness to move varies with age: as age increases, willingness to move to the United States for a better job decreases. However, only Alberta has a majority of 18-24 year olds (62.6%) willing to move to the US for employment.

Taken together, these data indicate that – for provinces – risks of "brain drain" to other provinces are greater than to the United States. Analysis of brain drain tends to be done on a national basis, and the effects of interprovincial mobility are therefore not revealed. This fails

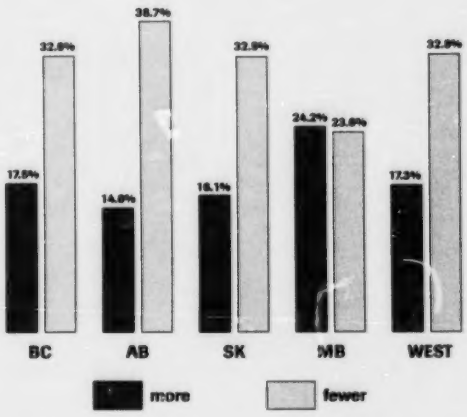
to capture an important dynamic within Canada and within western Canada: students, young people, and the highly educated are the most mobile, and are the types of individuals for whom provinces actively compete. Within western Canada, the provinces of Saskatchewan, and to a somewhat lesser extent, Manitoba are at particular risk of losing their young skilled workers to other Canadian provinces. Losses to the United States, while still important, do not pose as great of a threat as losses to other Canadian provinces. This is not to suggest in the least that mobility is a bad thing in Canada – far from it. But the reality of large differences in mobility gains and losses has important public policy consequences for the Canadian provinces that must be acknowledged and addressed.

Immigration

Despite growing research about the importance of immigration to Canada's future (see Roach and Berdahl, 2001; Gibbins and Vander Ploeg, 2000), nearly one in three western Canadians feels that Canada should accept fewer immigrants. Respondents were asked: "Do you think Canada should accept more immigrants, fewer immigrants, or about the same number we accept now?" One half of respondents (50.0%) feel the current level is appropriate, 32.8% feel that levels are too high, and 17.3% feel Canada should accept more immigrants than it does right now (Figure 25). Manitoba stands out as the province most supportive of increasing immigration levels, while Alberta stands out as the province most supportive of decreasing immigration levels.

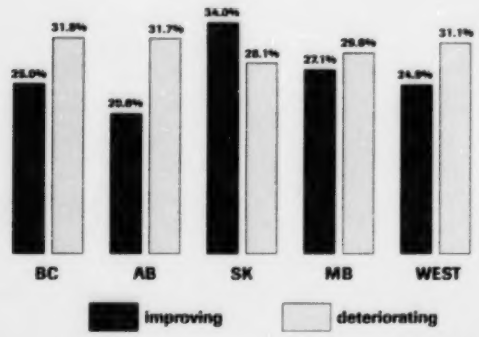
Men, higher income respondents, residents of large cities, and highly educated respondents are the most likely to support increased immigration levels; women, lower income respondents, residents of rural areas, and respondents with lower education levels are the most likely to support decreased immigration levels. It should be noted that although Canadian Alliance federal voters are less likely than other federal voters to support increased immigration, non-voters are the most opposed to current immigration levels. Four in ten non-voters (40.1%) feel current immigration levels should be reduced.

Figure 25:
Accept More/Fewer Immigrants



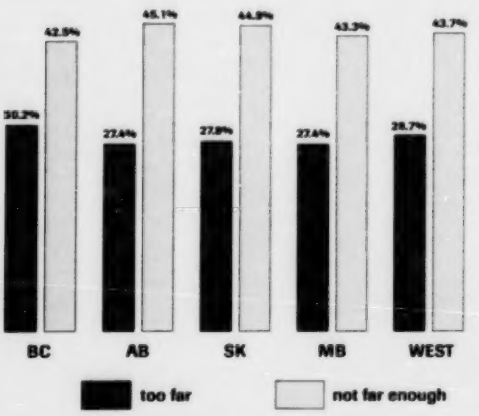
Survey Question: Do you think Canada should accept more immigrants, fewer immigrants, or about the same number we accept now? n=3,151

Figure 26:
Aboriginal–Non-Aboriginal Relations Improving/Deteriorating



Survey Question: Do you think relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians are improving, deteriorating, or staying about the same? n=3,152

Figure 27:
Governments Have Gone Too Far/Not Far Enough to Reach an Understanding With Aboriginal Peoples



Survey Question: In your opinion, have governments in Canada gone too far, have they not gone far enough, or have they gone as far as they need to, in trying to reach an understanding with Aboriginal peoples? n=3,039

Aboriginal Issues

Western Canada is home to almost two-thirds of Canada's Aboriginal population, and Aboriginals comprise approximately 6% of the West's population (Roach and Berdahl, 2001). There are a number of public policy challenges related to Aboriginals, including land claim settlements, self-government, poverty, and social challenges including a history of racial tensions between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. The survey asked two questions exploring general issues of Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal relations and policy directions.

The first question asked respondents: "Do you think relations between Aboriginal peoples and other Canadians are improving, deteriorating, or staying about the same?"[4] Over four in ten western Canadians (44.1%) feel that relations are staying about the same. Almost one-third of western Canadians feel that relations are deteriorating, and for all provinces except Saskatchewan, a greater number feel relations are deteriorating than feel relations are improving (Figure 26). A quarter of western Canadians feel that Aboriginal–non-Aboriginal relations are improving, with Saskatchewan respondents the most likely to report improving relations.

Perceptions vary with federal voting behaviour. Those who voted Canadian Alliance are less likely to say that relations are improving (17.8%), and much more likely to say that relations are deteriorating (39.8%). Those who voted NDP, on the other hand, have the opposite pattern: federal NDP voters are more likely to say that relations are improving (32.6%) and less likely to say that relations are deteriorating (22.2%).

Respondents were also asked: "In your opinion, have governments in Canada gone too far, have they not gone far enough, or have they gone as far as they need to, in trying to reach an understanding with Aboriginal peoples?" Over four in ten respondents feel Canadian governments have not gone far enough in trying to reach an understanding with Aboriginal peoples, while almost three in ten (27.6%) feel governments have gone as far as they need to (Figure 27). Almost three in ten western Canadians feel governments have gone too far in trying to reach an understanding with Aboriginal peoples.

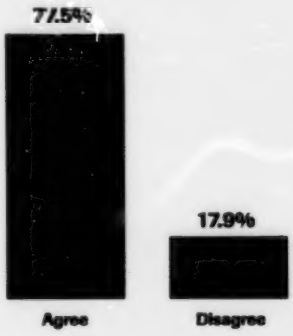
British Columbia respondents are slightly more likely to state that governments have gone too far.

Again, there are significant federal party vote differences. Canadian Alliance voters are much more likely than other respondents to state governments have gone too far (43.1%), and much less likely to state governments have not gone far enough (32.7%). NDP voters have the reverse pattern, being much more likely to state governments have not gone far enough (63.2%) and much less likely to state governments have gone too far (12.9%).

Retirement Planning

Like the rest of Canada, the West is experiencing significant population aging (see Roach and Berdahl, 2001). This demographic shift will have a tremendous impact on public policy, particularly public pension programs, in the years ahead. To explore attitudes about the role of government in providing retirement supports, survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: "Instead of relying on government so much, people should take more responsibility for their own retirement plans." Almost eight in ten western Canadians agree with this statement (Figure 28). The provinces do not differ significantly. Agreement is highest among high income earners, 55-64 year olds, and retired respondents. Agreement is lowest among NDP voters, students, low income earners, and 18-24 year olds.

Figure 28:
Canadians Should Take More Responsibility for Their Own Retirement Plans



Survey Question: Instead of relying on government so much, people should take more responsibility for their own retirement plans. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) n=3,108

GLOBALIZATION

The term "globalization" has been used extensively in public debate for a number of years. Globalization typically refers to the increased interdependence of international economies, the global mobility of capital and labour, international (and often free) trade, and the growing revolution in information technologies. As the public protests in Seattle in 2000 and in Quebec City in 2001 demonstrate, there is considerable debate about the merits of globalization, with criticisms ranging from concerns about democratic practices and labour protections to concerns about the environment.

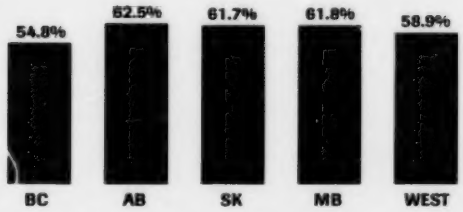
Impact of Increased Global Trade

Despite debate about the merits of globalization, western Canadians are largely in favour of increased global trade, seeing its impact on both Canada as a whole and the individual western provinces as positive. When asked, "Do you think that increased global trade has been good for Canada?", almost six in ten western Canadians respond "yes" (Figure 29). British Columbia respondents stand out from other western Canadians with slightly lower support, but a majority still did respond that increased global trade has benefited Canada. There are a number of possible explanations for the British Columbia distinction: BC has high environmental group activity and high union membership (environmental groups and unions are often critical of globalization), and BC experienced significant economic challenges in the 1997-8 period as a result of the Asian economic downturn. This experience may have raised questions within the province about the benefits of increased global trade.

Two groups – young people and federal voters for non-mainstream parties – stand out on this question, but for very different reasons. Young people are the most supportive of increased global trade, with almost eight in ten 18-24 year olds (78.6%) and over six in ten 25-34 year olds (62.7%) answering yes to the question. Respondents who voted for non-mainstream parties or independents in the 2000 federal election are the least supportive of increased global trade, with only three in ten (28.4%) answering yes. For NDP voters, this figure jumps to four in ten (43.1%).

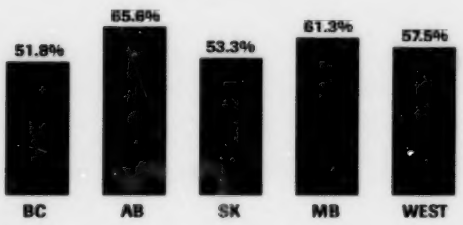
Support for global trade remains when the question is framed in terms of the province, but the difference between the provinces become more pronounced. Again, almost six in ten feel the impact on their province has been good, but Alberta and Manitoba stand out as the most supportive (Figure 30). For Saskatchewan and British Columbia, support drops to one in two respondents. It is interesting to note that both Saskatchewan and British Columbia are provinces with more diversified global trading patterns: while over 80% of Manitoba and Alberta exports went to the United States in 2000, only 62% of Saskatchewan exports and 67% of BC exports were US-bound, with a significant proportion of these provinces' exports destined for Asian countries (Roach and Berdahl, 2001: 70). Although this makes these two provinces less dependent on the American economy, it does leave them more open to global economic fluctuations, such as the Asian economic downturn noted earlier.

Figure 29:
Global Trade is Good for Canada



Survey Question: As you may know, Canada has signed free trade agreements with the United States and Mexico and is a member of the WTO (World Trade Organization) that promotes trade between countries around the world. Do you think that increased global trade has been good for Canada? n=3,037

Figure 30:
Global Trade is Good for My Province



Survey Question: As you may know, Canada has signed free trade agreements with the United States and Mexico and is a member of the WTO (World Trade Organization) that promotes trade between countries around the world. Do you think that increased global trade has been good for your province? n=2,941

Tools for Global Competitiveness

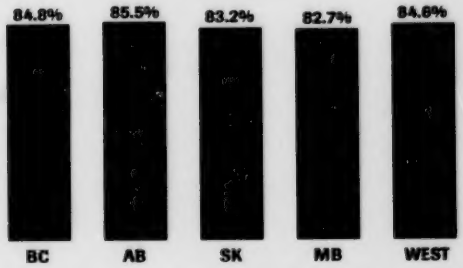
One characteristic of the global economy is competition – competition for businesses and industry clusters, for capital and investment dollars, for skilled labour, and for tourists. Because of the mobility of individuals, businesses and capital, governments must make strategic policy choices. Survey respondents were asked about five possible policy options: lowering taxes; investing in our system of public education; attracting high-tech business to the region; increasing the global profile of western Canadian cities; and promoting closer economic ties with the US. Respondents were asked to rank each option as a high, medium or low priority as an activity that "governments can do to ensure that the West can compete successfully in the global economy."

Across all four provinces, investing in our system of public education is strongly identified as important to regional global competitiveness, with over eight in ten survey respondents stating this to be a high priority (Figure 31). Interestingly, support for this option is strong among all provinces, age categories, and education categories. Women are slightly more likely to rate public education as a high priority, while Alliance federal voters and high income earners ($150,000+) are less likely to do so.

There has been considerable discussion in recent years about the importance of the knowledge industries to the "new economy," and it is therefore not surprising that seven in ten respondents see attracting high-tech business to the region as a high priority for global competitiveness (Figure 32). Responses do not differ significantly between the provinces.

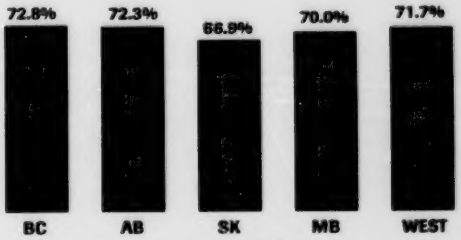
Given public debates in recent years about tax rates at all levels of government in Canada, it is striking that lowering taxes comes in third among the five selected options for global competitiveness. However, support remains strong, with six in ten western Canadians feeling that tax rates should be lowered to ensure the West's global competitiveness (Figure 33). Provincial differences are not marked. There is an interesting lack of variation between Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba given the very different tax regimes between the provinces. The only group that strongly stands apart on this question is Canadian Alliance federal voters, with seven in ten (69.5%) selecting lowering taxes as a high priority for global competitiveness.

Figure 31:
Investing in Our System of Public Education Should be a High Priority



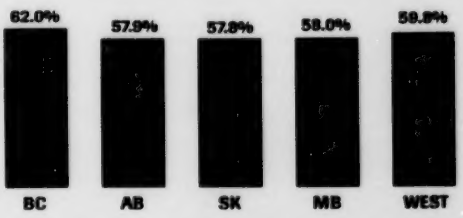
Survey Question: Thinking about what governments can do to ensure that the West can compete successfully in the global economy, how would you rate the priority of the following: Investing in our system of public education. Should that be a high priority; medium priority; low priority? n=3,223

Figure 32:
Attracting High-Tech Businesses to the Region Should be a High Priority



Survey Question: Thinking about what governments can do to ensure that the West can compete successfully in the global economy, how would you rate the priority of the following: Attracting high-tech businesses to the region. Should that be a high priority; medium priority; low priority? n=3,212

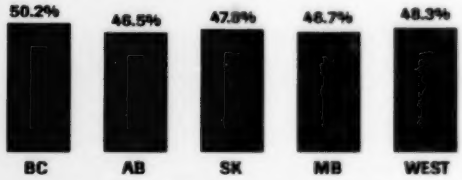
Figure 33:
Lowering Taxes Should be a High Priority



Survey Question: Thinking about what governments can do to ensure that the West can compete successfully in the global economy, how would you rate the priority of the following: Lowering taxes. Should that be a high priority; medium priority; low priority? n=3,214

Many analysts argue that cities will emerge as dominant players in the new global economy, and this is seen in the fact that Canadian cities are working hard to place themselves on the global stage. Cities attempt to brand themselves as high-tech centres or industrial foci, and compete for international events such as the Olympic Games to increase general global awareness of their existence. Many cities have economic development authorities that are responsible for creating a distinct international profile for their city and surrounding area.

Figure 34:
Increasing the Global Profile of Western Canadian Cities Should be a High Priority



Survey Question: Thinking about what governments can do to ensure that the West can compete successfully in the global economy, how would you rate the priority of the following: Increasing the profile of western Canadian cities. Should that be a high priority; medium priority; low priority? n=3,126

The survey findings suggest that the public is becoming aware of cities as global players: nearly one in two respondents feel that increasing the global profile of western Canadian cities is a high priority for global competitiveness (Figure 34), with only one in ten (10.6%) rating it as a low priority. This is somewhat surprising, given that Canada – and particularly western Canada – has not had significant debate about the role of cities as global economic drivers. Variations are seen between the provinces, with BC respondents more likely than respondents from other provinces to rate this as a high priority.

Promoting closer economic ties with the US ranks last of the five options as a high priority for governments to ensure the West's global competitiveness. In total, only three in ten respondents indicate that "promoting closer economic ties with the United States" is a high priority (Figure 35), and almost one in four (23.6%) rate it as a low priority. Variations are seen between the provinces, with BC respondents the most likely to rate this as a high priority. However, even among BC respondents, only one in three indicate closer economic ties with the US to be a high priority. These data may reflect the fact that western Canadian provinces already have significant economic ties with the US, ranging from almost 90% of Alberta's 2000 exports to 62% of Saskatchewan's 2000 exports (Roach and Berdahl, 2001: 70). Again, the BC distinction may reflect some negative reaction to the fluctuations in the Asian economy in the late 1990s. Another possible explanation for the low scoring of this option is concern about the "distinctiveness" of Canada. Some critics argue that globalization weakens Canadian cultural identity, and this concern may influence the ranking of this option.

Figure 35:
Promoting Closer Economic Ties With the United States Should be a High Priority

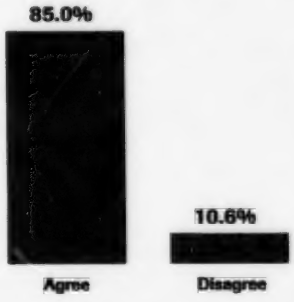
Survey Question: Thinking about what governments can do to ensure that the West can compete successfully in the global economy, how would you rate the priority of the following: Promoting closer economic ties with the United States. Should that be a high priority; medium priority; low priority? n=3,161

Post-Secondary Education

The ability to compete globally is often linked to knowledge workers and an educated labour force. But are western Canadian universities

providing adequate training and education for the region? Attempts to rank universities are highly contentious; for example, the well-known Maclean's ranking of Canadian universities is argued by many to have serious methodological flaws. What is clear is that western Canadians perceive their universities to be of equal caliber to those in the rest of Canada. Survey respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statement: "The universities in western Canada are, on average, at least as good as those in central and eastern Canada." A full 85% of western Canadians agree (Figure 36). Only one in ten respondents disagrees. Manitoba and Saskatchewan respondents are slightly less likely to agree (80.1% and 81.4% respectively). Agreement is highest among those with graduate/professional degrees, those aged 65 and over, and retired respondents. Agreement is lowest among 18-24 year olds.

Figure 36:
Western Canadian Universities are as Good as Other Canadian Universities

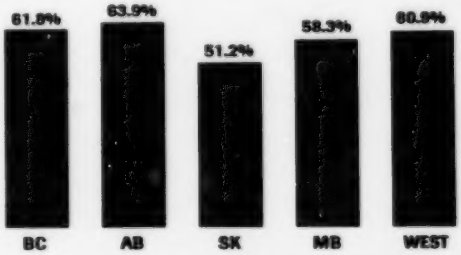


Survey Question: The universities in western Canada are, on average, at least as good as those in central and eastern Canada. (strongly agree; somewhat agree; neither agree nor disagree; somewhat disagree; strongly disagree) n=2,916

Internet Usage in the West

Given the importance of communications and "connectivity" to global competitiveness, survey respondents were asked a number of questions about their Internet usage. The data indicate that most western Canadians use the Internet: six in ten western Canadians can be classified as engaging in high Internet use, meaning that they use the Internet daily or a few times a week (Figure 37). Another 11.5% can be classified as engaging in low Internet use, using the Internet a few times a month or less. Nearly three in ten (27.6%) western Canadians do not use the Internet at all. There are important provincial variations in Internet use, with Saskatchewan as an outlier: only one in two Saskatchewan respondents uses the Internet at least a few times a week.

Figure 37:
High Internet Use

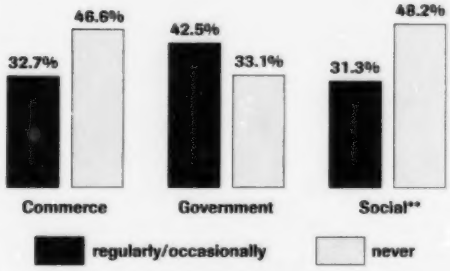


High use--daily or a few times a week. Survey Question: About how many times do you use the Internet? (daily; a few times a week; a few times a month; once a month; less than once a month/a few times a year; never) n=3,224

High Internet users tend to be male, students or full-time workers, under 55 years of age, higher income, living in large urban centres and highly educated. Non-users tend to be female, retired, unemployed or homemakers, over 65 years of age, lower income, rural and lower education. Although not perfectly linear, the pattern is that as education, urban size, and income increase, so too does Internet usage, and as age increases, Internet usage decreases.

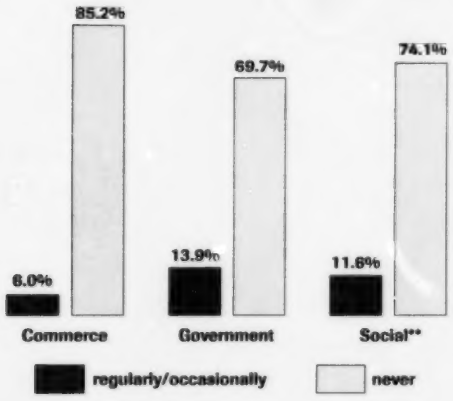
Of all Internet users, over half (54.2%) report using the Internet at both home and work, with another third (37.0%) reporting use outside work only. Less than one in ten (8.8%) only use the Internet at work.

Figure 38:
Types of Internet Use by High* Internet Users



*High users use the Internet daily or a few times a week. **Excludes e-mail.
Survey Questions: How often do you use the Internet to make purchases or to conduct business? How often do you use the Internet to interact with governments, such as reading government information or contacting politicians? How often do you use the Internet to interact socially (excluding e-mail)? (regularly; occasionally; rarely; never) n=1962

Figure 39:
Types of Internet Use by Low* Internet Users



*Low users use the Internet a few times a month or less. **Excludes e-mail.
Survey Questions: How often do you use the Internet to make purchases or to conduct business? How often do you use the Internet to interact with governments, such as reading government information or contacting politicians? How often do you use the Internet to interact socially (excluding e-mail)? (regularly; occasionally; rarely; never) n=371

Respondents were asked to comment on their use of the Internet for e-commerce, e-government, and social purposes (excluding e-mail). Surprisingly, usage rates are highest for interactions with government, with 38.0% of all Internet users reporting regularly or occasionally using "the Internet to interact with governments, such as reading government information or contacting politicians." Similar usage rates are reported for using "the Internet to make purchases or to conduct business transactions" (28.5% regularly/occasionally), and using "the Internet to interact socially" (28.2% regularly/occasionally).[5] As might be expected, for all forms of interactions, usage rates are highest among "high" Internet users (Figures 38 and 39). Users of e-commerce tend to be male, highly educated, higher income, full-time workers, aged 25-52, and Canadian Alliance or Liberal federal voters. Users of e-government tend to be highly educated, higher income, full-time workers, and NDP federal voters. Users of the Internet for social interaction tend to be male, aged 18-24, lower income and education, students, and non-voters in the last federal election.

Arts and Culture Attendance

There has been considerable interest in recent years in the role of arts and culture and other urban amenities in the global competitiveness of local areas (see Florida, 2000). To establish a baseline understanding of western Canadians' involvement in arts and culture activities, survey respondents were asked: "On average, how many times do you attend a local arts or cultural event, such as live theatre or music, or a museum?" Respondents report a moderate level of attendance at local arts and cultural events: almost one-third (32.0%) attend such events once a month or more, while just over half (53.1%) attend less than once a month. The remaining 14.9% report never attending such events. The provinces differ somewhat, with BC (34.1%) and Alberta (32.0%) respondents more likely than Manitoba (28.8%) and Saskatchewan (27.8%) respondents to attend events at least once a month.

Frequent arts and culture attendees – those who attend at least once a month – tend to be highly educated, students, aged 18-24, and/or higher income. Two groups stand out as having particularly high attendance levels: 42.6% of students and 53.7% of respondents with graduate/professional degrees report attending local arts and culture events at least once a month.

UNDERSTANDING THE WEST: MYTHS AND REALITIES

In popular discourse and political rhetoric, some people attempt to "explain away" the West through a number of mechanisms. Some argue that western alienation is really rural alienation, others argue that attitudinal differences are more partisan than regional, while others assume that the alienated are primarily male, middle aged, and wealthy. The Building the New West Survey tests these assumptions and points to a western reality that is much more complex and subtle than hasty explanations suggest.

Is there a generational divide within the West?

There are a number of clear and important differences between three broad age categories in the West: young (aged 18-34), middle (aged 35-64) and older (aged 65+). Indeed, on most questions, statistically significant differences are found between these age categories. Compared to middle and older respondents, young respondents:

- Report lower levels of alienation, and less agreement that their province would be better off economically if it separated from Canada;
- Are less likely to say the federal government has too much power, and more likely to say that municipalities need more power;
- Are less supportive of Senate reform and slightly more supportive of referendums;
- Are more likely to say that increased global trade has been good for Canada and their province, but less likely to rate taxes, high-tech, global cities or increased ties to the US as high priority tools for global competitiveness;
- Are more likely to support current immigration levels, to say that governments have not gone far enough in Aboriginal relations, and to say that Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations are neither improving or deteriorating;
- Are less likely to agree that western Canadian universities are as good as those in the rest of Canada; and
- Are more likely to have a local identification, and less likely to have a western Canadian identification.

These differences do not mean that young westerners hold dramatically different policy views than the other two age categories – differences tend to be seen in intensity rather than direction. For example, although the young respondents report lower levels of alienation, a majority still feels that their province does not get enough respect (54.1%), get its fair share of transfers (52.0%), or have its fair share of influence (63.1%). Similarly, while support for an elected and equal Senate is lower among young respondents, almost eight in ten young western Canadians (78.7%) support Senate reform. Younger respondents do appear to be both more "localized" and more "globalized," more liberal in their views about immigration and Aboriginal issues, and less dissatisfied with the current Canadian federal system.

Can western alienation be explained by partisanship?

There is no denying that political ideology influences attitudes about the West. On every question except one (on-reserve casinos), statistically significant differences exist among the different cohorts of federal party voters. However, many of these differences are a matter of degree rather than truly opposing partisan views. On the alienation questions, a majority of voters for all four official federal parties (Canadian Alliance, Liberal, Progressive Conservative, and NDP) report that their province does not get enough

respect, does not get its fair share of transfers, and does not have its fair share of influence. Canadian Alliance voters are much more likely to provide such responses. On the institutional reform questions, a majority of voters from all four parties support Senate reform, electoral reform, and referendums, but again the Canadian Alliance voters stand out for their higher levels of agreement. On the economic separatism question, a majority of voters from all four parties disagree, but strong right-left differences exist, with Alliance voters most likely to agree. And on the West as a distinct region, a majority of voters from all four parties agree, but only among Alliance voters does a majority *strongly* agree.

The larger differences are seen in identities and in attitudes about the balance of powers between the federal and provincial governments. Identification with Canada is highest among Liberal and NDP voters, and fails to be mentioned by a majority of Canadian Alliance or Progressive Conservative voters. While a majority of voters for all parties reports a provincial identification, provincial identities are higher among Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative voters. Western Canadian identities fail to achieve a majority among voters for any party, but are highest among Canadian Alliance voters and lowest among Liberal voters. Lastly, Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative voters are more likely to say that the federal government has too much power, while Liberal and NDP voters are more likely to say that the balance is about right.

There is no denying that partisanship does play into western Canadian attitudes, alienation and regionalism, but to dismiss western Canadian attitudes as simply partisan would be incorrect. It is striking that even among federal voters supporting parties other than the Canadian Alliance there are strong sentiments of alienation and regional identity. Partisanship (as identified by federal voting) is part of the picture, but does not tell the complete story.

Is there an urban-rural divide in the West?

Respondents were divided into three categories: rural (those living in areas with populations less than 10,000), small urban (those living in urban areas with populations of 10,000 – 99,999), and large urban (those living in CMAs).[6] Differences are found between these categories on a number of variables; differences are particularly apparent between the rural and large urban respondents. Compared to the large urban respondents, rural respondents are: more likely to agree with the economic separation question and with all three institutional reform questions; more likely to say that governments have gone too far in Aboriginal relations and to say that current immigration levels should be reduced; and more likely to identify with their province. Rural respondents are less likely than large urban respondents to identify with Canada. Interestingly, rural respondents are more likely than large urban respondents to say that their municipal government does not have enough power, and large urban respondents are less likely than rural or small urban respondents to say that the federal government has too much power. Another interesting finding is that there are very few urban-rural differences on the globalization questions.

Is western alienation largely a rural issue? Based on the survey, the answer appears to be no. On the respect and influence questions, there are no statistically significant differences between the urban and rural respondents. Only one alienation question has significant differences, and the gap between the urban and rural respondents is not particularly large. Six in ten rural respondents (60.9%), compared to 54.4% of small urban and 54.9% of large urban respondents, feel that their province does not receive its fair share of federal transfers. Thus, the survey data suggest that alienation is a western Canadian issue, regardless of urban size.

Generally speaking, it should be noted that the urban-rural differences are not as strong or as numerous as the generational and partisanship differences.

Is there a gender gap in the West?

Numerous studies have pointed to the importance of gender gaps, both internationally and within Canada. The public opinion data suggest the presence of a slight gender gap, but the differences are not as strong as those seen among the different age categories. Perhaps one of the largest reported gaps is seen in voting behaviour in the 2000 federal election, with significantly more men than women reporting voting for the Canadian Alliance party, and a larger number of women than men reporting voting for the NDP and Progressive Conservative parties or not voting. On public policy issues, compared to men women are found to be:

- Somewhat less supportive of Senate reform, and more supportive of electoral reform and referendums;
- Less likely to agree that their province would be better off economically if it separated from Canada;
- Less likely to agree that increased global trade has been good for Canada and their province, more likely to rate public education as a high priority for competitiveness and less likely to rate high tech or increased ties to the US as high priority tools for global competitiveness;
- More likely to support reduced immigration rates, more likely to say Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations are improving, and less likely to say that Canadian governments have gone too far to reach an understanding with Aboriginal peoples; and
- More likely to report a local or provincial identification, and less likely to report a western Canadian or North American identification.

The direction of these opinion differences corresponds roughly to the gap in reported voting behaviour.

What is the impact of Internet usage on attitudes?

It might be expected that those who are regular users of the Internet would have different attitudes from infrequent or non-users in a number of policy areas. For example, one might anticipate that regular Internet users would have more global views. There is some support for this, but most differences can be explained by the age variations in regular Internet usage. A handful of issues are related to regular Internet usage after controlling for age category. Compared to infrequent or non-users, regular Internet users are:

- Less supportive of referendums and (among 35-64 year olds) less supportive of electoral reform;
- Less likely to say that municipal governments have too little power;
- More likely to say that increased global trade has been good for their province and (among 35-64 year olds) for Canada, more likely to rate attracting high tech as a high priority tool for global competitiveness, and (among 18-34 year olds) less likely to rate lowering taxes as a high priority tool;
- More likely to say that Aboriginal-non-Aboriginal relations are deteriorating, more likely to say that Canada should accept more immigrants; and (among 35-64 year olds) more likely to report a Canadian identification.

The results do not point clearly to a coherent set of difference between regular and infrequent/non-users, and it is probable that many of the differences noted above are spurious.

Who are the most alienated?

Those most likely to report "alienated" responses to the questions about respect, influence and transfers are older respondents, retirees, middle-income respondents, Canadian Alliance voters, respondents with a grade 12, trade school/college certificate or incomplete university education, and Saskatchewan and British Columbia respondents. The strongest indicators of alienation are federal voting (Canadian Alliance voters) and province of residence (Saskatchewan and British Columbia residents).

What does the West want?

The survey did not (and could not) explore an exhaustive list of public policy options. However, based on the questions that were asked, the survey strongly suggests that western Canadians feel their current representative mechanisms are inadequate, and that the Canadian federal system is not balanced appropriately. This is seen in support for institutional reforms, sentiments that the federal government has too much power, and alienation levels. Interestingly, these opinions are not limited to the West; previous surveys have found similar attitudes in other regions (see CRIC, 2000). These concerns about the Canadian political system (and particularly about Canadian federalism) suggest that Canadians would like greater public debate on the nature of political representation and, if necessary, a reconsideration of the appropriate representative mechanisms and institutions.

IS THE WEST A REGION?

The survey data suggest a number of similarities in western Canadian opinion. While provincial differences do exist, they are rarely large. There is also an absence of a consistent pattern for provincial differences: on some issues, British Columbia and Saskatchewan respondents tend to coalesce, on others there is an "east-west" divide within the region, and on still others Manitoba stands apart from the other three provinces. In general, there appears to be some degree of consistency of responses across all four provinces. What the survey cannot answer is whether this consistency would be seen in Canada as a whole or if there is a distinctly "western" body of opinion and thought.

Based on socio-economic and demographic data, it is possible to argue that the West is not a region. This sentiment is further reinforced by a lack of political and institutional coordination. However, there appear to be attitudinal, emotional and familial ties that bind the four western provinces together as a region. This is seen in the high levels of agreement that the West is a distinct region, in the similar attitudes on many policy issues, and in the fact that many western Canadians came to their current province from another western Canadian province. The question that remains is to what extent these regional ties will last in the face of growing regional disparities and globalization.

The larger question, then, for western Canadians and their governments is: to what extent should the West be acting as a region? Are there sufficient motivations for the four western provinces to work together to coordinate social and economic strengths? If so, should the western provinces find political and institutional vehicles to allow for greater regional cooperation? The answers to these questions impact the future role of the West in Canada, and should be considered fully in western Canadian policy debates. ■

ENDNOTES

1. For this question and other questions that refer to "your province," the name of the province of residence was read instead of the words "your province." The "your province" terminology is used in this report only for ease of reading.

2. To allow for comparability, Canada West's survey questions replicated those used in Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) studies of Quebec and Canada (CRIC, 2000: 25; personal communications with Dr. Andrew Parkin, CRIC Assistant Director - Research).

3. The index is additive with no weighting applied to the questions. The index has three categories: low (low alienation scores on most questions answered), moderate (moderate alienation scores or a mix of high and low alienation scores on questions answered), and high (high alienation scores on most questions answered). Cronbach's alpha = .7037.

4. The Aboriginal "relations" and "understanding" survey questions replicate those used in Centre for Research and Information on Canada (CRIC) studies of Quebec and Canada (CRIC, 2000; personal communications with Dr. Andrew Parkin, CRIC Assistant Director - Research).

5. For respondents wishing clarification, social interaction was defined as participating in chat rooms, discussion forums or newsgroups, ICQ, Amazon Messenger, or Multiple Player Games. It was not defined as e-mail.

6. The population distinctions are based on Statistics Canada classifications. Respondents were divided into the urban-rural categories based on self-identified postal codes (first three digits).

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